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THE BAPTIST

Record

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Fishers of Men seek decisions for Christ

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

The Fishers of Men National Tournament Trail made a stop at the Ross Barnett Reservoir outside Jackson on October 17-18 for the second of four regional tournaments. Winners of the regional tournaments go on to the national tournament, at a site yet to be announced.

The sport is bass fishing, and while there are many fishing tournaments around the South and the country, Fishers of Men approaches the sport with an unabashed evangelistic thrust.

During the dinner kicking off the tournament October 16 at Broadmoor Church, Madison, there were 23 first-time decisions for Christ and approximately 36 rededications. Prior to this event, Fishers of Men recorded 773 salvation decisions, with over 1500 rededications, in the current tournament season.

On an overcast, blustery day at Ross Barnett Reservoir, with hundreds of men and women braving choppy waters, an innovative evangelistic ministry was being accomplished as the first full day of fishing took place.

According to Al Odom, national director of Fishers of Men, the ministry began in 1995 at his church in South Carolina. "My pastor, Ron Richardson, knew I loved bass fishing, and brought a brochure that had just come to the church about a fishing event in Tennessee. What caught my eye was the purpose — outreach evangelism. The weighmaster for that event was Jimmy Houston, who has been in the spotlight recently for the stand he's taken on the bass tournament fishing circuit. I thought about this all during church, because I've got a heart for these guys and wanted to reach them."

"We started in 1996 at Santee Cooper," Odom continued, "and we did it again in 1997. I saw that we were reaching people during these events, but we weren't reaching that many, because we were only having about 50 people at these events. So, we thought, 'Why don't we start a fishing trail, with events all over the state [of South Carolina]?' We decided not to have any Sunday fishing, and God blessed. We structure our events with a free meal, and give away thousands of dollars in prizes and fish the following day."

Odom said Fishers of Men started the National Tournament Trail in 1998. There were four original divisions: North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. There were 21 events in four trails — five divisions in each trail and a national championship. Since that time, the Fishers of Men National Tournament Trail has grown to forty divisions. Odom anticipates 48 divisions in 2004.

THE ONES THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY — Jimmy Green (second from left) of Vancleave touts the largest bass caught October 17 during the Fishers of Men Southeast Regional Tournament at Ross Barnett Reservoir outside Jackson. The largemouth bass weighed in at 8.06 lbs. Neal Clark (second from right), also of Vancleave, shows off another winner as Bobby Eads (left), vice-president of Fishers of Men, and Al Odom (right), Fishers of Men national director, look on. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

Mississippi has three divisions. Each Fishers of Men division features four divisional tournaments as well as a Regional Qualifying Tournament. Teams attempt to qualify as one of the teams to represent their division in one of the four Regional Championship Tournaments, of which the Reservoir event was part. The points cham-

Since then, Odom has made Fishers of Men his full-time vocation.

The Mississippi regional event hosted 194 boats in two-person team competitions. Eleven divisions were represented, from Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The winner in the tournament won a fully equipped Triton boat powered by a Mercury motor — a \$20,000 prize. "Of course, we're trying to promote our faith in Jesus Christ, and get the participants turned on to the Lord by providing them a family-friendly environment they can enjoy."

"The Mississippi Baptist Convention has been a great sponsor for this event," said Odom. "Their help has been invaluable."

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Evangelism Department spearheaded the tournament. Jim Phillips, pastor of North Greenwood Church, is regional director for Fishers of Men. "We had 15 boats at our first tournament at Natchez State Park in 1999," Phillips said. "Now we average 52 boats in our division."

"If the Mississippi Baptist Convention hadn't gotten behind this, we never could have pulled it off. The Convention provided the meal at Broadmoor, some replacement equipment, and other incidentals."

"I'm amazed at just how big and awesome God is," said Odom. "To think that He could take one little spark that the Holy Spirit put in my heart to do something, and that he could take me and all my flaws to do such a mighty work."

The Fishers of Men regional tournament in Mississippi was supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

Be on time for
Sunday School!



Daylight Savings Time
ends at 2 a.m. on
Sunday, October 26.

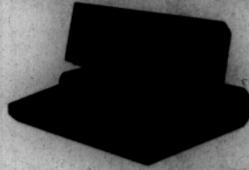
Turn clocks back one hour
before going to bed
on October 25.



pions from each division are joined by the top seven finishers from the Regional Championship Tournament, the highest placing team from each division in the Regional Championship Tournament, and the defending National Champions to make up the 105 boat field for the 2003 Fishers of Men National Championship Tournament, to be held November 14-15.

"I was a school teacher, and a football and baseball coach," said Odom, "and by 2000 I was being worked to death. I prayed and asked the Lord, 'Is this what you want me to do, and can I provide for my family?'"

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Another annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention is upon us, the 168th such gathering in the long and noble history of Mississippi Baptists. Since Revolutionary War veteran and Baptist preacher Richard Curtis Jr. floated down the young nation's swift-flowing, navigable waterways from South Carolina to the southwest corner of Mississippi and established the first Baptist churches, a lot has happened.

Churches were formed all across the untamed territory that would eventually become the State of Mississippi. Those far-flung congregations soon saw the benefits of banding together for Kingdom work, before Southern Baptists hatched the same idea on a national scale. Colleges were eventually brought under the convention's umbrella so young people could be assured a Christian-based higher education. Hospitals were formed to provide healing in the Name of the Great Physician. An orphanage was chartered to help the most helpless among us, the little ones the Savior loves so deeply.

Many other agencies, institutions, and programs have been built by Mississippi Baptists since those early days. Thanks be to God that Mississippi Baptists have never lost the original zeal that moved them to establish those first churches and then the Mississippi Baptist Association so many years ago. Through good times and bad, war and peace, agreement and conflict, Mississippi Baptists have always stood as one great body of believers, focused like a laser, to tell a lost world of the salvation found in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

It hasn't always been safe to be a Mississippi Baptist. Catholic authorities across the river in Louisiana tried their best to apprehend Richard Curtis Jr., so angry were they when he began preaching the Gospel and planting churches. He was forced to flee for his life, but he wasn't gone for long. His work was a movement of God, and could not be stopped.

That movement of God continues to this day. There isn't another statewide group of Baptists anywhere in the Southern Baptist Convention who are more united, more spirited, and more determined to do their part to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). We are a juggernaut for Jesus, and always have been.

It's not like that in many other state conventions these days. One of our sister states is so divided that Baptists there are preparing to spend a million dollars in legal fees to fight each other in secular courts. Many Baptists there have chosen sides, and many others are being pressured to join the fight.

In that state and several other states, Baptists have split into two conventions and openly belittle each other in an attempt to woo uncommitted brethren to their cause. The ways of raw secular politics abound. Enemies have been identified, and war has been declared.

In almost every case, the work of the Lord has suffered in some way. Budgets are not met, missionaries cannot be appointed, staffers must be fired, and visionary programs for the future must be mothballed or canceled altogether. Yet rival conventions in these states continue to duplicate programs and battle for the dwindling support that's still out there. Much too much ego is involved.

May God forbid such unholy conduct among Mississippi Baptists. As bloody battles for power and control rage all around us, may God grant us both the courage and the humility to resist the fruitless tactics and goals of the secular world.

"WELL, MY HUSBAND IS A MINISTER AND HE FIGHTS TERRORISM WITH WEAPONS OF MASS SALVATION!"



May Mississippi Baptists always be seen as the brightest light on the highest hill, pointing a lost world not to us and our accomplishments but to the Savior.

Every year at this time, we have the perfect opportunity to do just that. As we pray in advance for the annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention next week at First Church, Jackson, let us be faithful in seeking God's will for ourselves, our convention, and our lost world.

Let us pray for the discipline, self-control, and love for each other that we so very much need in order to be a shining example of Christ's love to an outside world so much in need of the Gospel.

As that lost world watches and waits, what will be our message to them?

GUEST OPINION:



My church, myself

By Jerry Grace, member
First Church, Vicksburg

All of these outstanding ordinary people lived exemplary Christian lives, the core of what created a great denomination and an unparalleled global mission effort. You could count on them to be there on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night — as Southern Baptist as any group who ever lived.

Recently I was reminded of this legacy on a trip to Southwestern Seminary. My own precious son has felt the call of God and was narrowing his choices for seminaries. For some people these institutions are characterized as conservative, moderate, or liberal as defined by convention politics. For me such labels mean little

to the thousands of devoted men and women trained by these institutions all over this country and world dealing with the struggles of ordinary people in day to day life.

Now my son will join them. How proud would be all of those people buried in that cemetery.

On the seminary visit we saw a simple table belonging to Lottie Moon. I wondered what she would think about the appropriate role of women in the church, and I concluded that she would be too busy doing what she knew and loved to worry about such things.

We stood in the dome of the beautiful administration

building adorned with portraits of all the Presidents past and current. What would they think about all the things that divide us? Their thoughts would be no different than that group of Baptists buried in New Prospect's cemetery. There is too much we have in common to let what divides us define us, and too much of the Christian life to enjoy to be miserable in the process.

Being a Baptist is certainly not the same thing as being a Christian, but in that difference lies the legacy of people. For some it means nothing, changing churches as easily and as often as clothing — but for me it is an enormous part of who I am. When it is my turn to be placed in that cemetery row, I hope I will deserve the honor of being in the presence of people who were proud to be Southern Baptist, lived the kinds of lives that brought respect of all who knew them, and gave real meaning to how the Christian life is supposed to be lived.

No, it is not as easy as it once was to be a Southern Baptist. For me it would be harder still to be something else.

New series aims to encourage teen girls

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — As teenage girls struggle to find their identity, navigate between the challenges of relationships at school, church, home and in the world, Out of Eden is helping show girls the right path.

The contemporary Christian trio of sisters has developed a six-session, video-driven Bible study for girls called This Is Your Life. With a copy of the curriculum, a video and a CD, youth leaders can host their own version of the series for teenage girls in their church or community.

Out of Eden presented the featured concert during this summer's SyncOnations/Acteens conference in Nashville sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union for girls in grades seven through 12.

This Is Your Life is designed for flexibility so that it can be utilized as Sunday School lessons for girls, a weekend retreat, small Bible study groups, once-a-quarter sleepovers, or a one-day event.

Whatever method is chosen, girls will study six lessons from God's Word, including discovering life's purpose, finding security and acceptance, maintaining modesty and fashion in today's world, discerning God's views on dating and sexual purity, overcoming abuse, and sorting out parental relationships.

The lessons correspond with Out of Eden's This Is Your Life CD of 11 pop songs with lyrics that directly address societal pressures, family conflicts,

During the session on Discovering Life's Destiny & Purpose, girls are reminded that "trusting God with our lives requires looking beyond our immediate situation and believing that God really has the best plan in mind. He won't necessarily show us all the details, but He will lead the way."

The text for the lesson comes from Jeremiah 29:1-14 and emphasizes that "despite poor treatment, imprisonment and rejection from his own friends and family, Jeremiah remained faithful to God's calling as a messenger of truth to God's people."

The Finding Security & Acceptance session identifies three traps into which teenage girls often fall: the approval/appearance trap, the performance/perfection trap, and the shame trap.

In session three, girls learn to identify some of the messages society sends about the importance of outer beauty, and then they learn to identify what God says about true beauty. The session discusses modesty, image and beauty from God's perspective, and reminds girls that real beauty is worth far more than merely looking good.

Discerning God's Views On Dating & Sexual Purity seeks to weave God's truth into conversations about relationships by showing girls specific passages in God's Word that address sexual purity. Girls will learn that no one is immune to the consequences of sexual immorality, boundaries must be established, minds must be kept pure, God supplies the necessary tools for avoiding pitfalls, and going against the societal norm is required.

The session titled Overcoming Abuse seeks to raise awareness about the issue of abuse among adolescent women and to gain insight into God's perspective on abuse. Nancy Alcorn, president and founder of Mercy Ministries of America for young women, provides insight.

"It's almost like there's a bottomless black hole inside of them; they feel so bad about themselves, they try to find something to fill the void, something to make them feel that they have more value," Alcorn says on the video.

Girls will be instructed about what to do if they have been abused or if they know of friends who are facing the hardship.

The final session, Sorting Out Parental Relationships, emphasizes the fact that parents will fail their children and make mistakes, but God will always love His children and never leave them. Girls will search God's Word for passages regarding forgiveness, sin and acceptance, and they'll be able to talk about and sort out issues they have been struggling with concerning their parents.

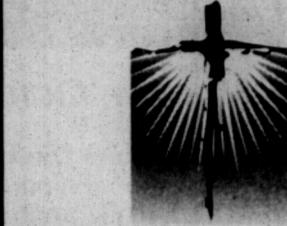


Out of Eden

peer pressure, and personal commitment to God. A corresponding six-session video includes an introduction, interaction between Out of Eden and four young women in Nashville, "on-the-street" interviews and guest appearances by experts and artists.

Girls participating in This Is Your Life will receive a devotional journal that allows them to record their private thoughts, write about what they've learned, admit issues they need to confront, and pray for a changed life.

The goal of This Is Your Life is to remind young girls that as they grow in Christ, they will mature into godly women who will impact their families, schools, communities, churches and culture. They will "shine like stars in a very dark world as representatives of a loving, caring God."



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
Record

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Schools rank high

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A total of 46 colleges and universities in the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) have been listed among the leaders in American higher education in U.S. News and World Report's annual survey, including all three of the colleges affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Among the Best Universities for Master's degree programs was Mississippi College in Clinton. In the Best Comprehensive Colleges for Bachelor's degrees were Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain and William Carey College in Hattiesburg. U.S. News and World Report studied more than 1,400 institutions across the United States, gathering data from the schools and soliciting opinions from peer institutions regarding perceptions of quality. The rankings are determined by analyzing data gathered in such categories as peer assessment, average graduation rate, average freshman retention rate, percentage of classes under 20, percentage of classes over 50, student/faculty ratio, SAT/ACT scores of students, freshmen in top 25 percent of high school class, acceptance rate of applying students, and alumni giving. For schools evaluated in the national universities-doctoral and liberal arts colleges-bachelor's categories, the ranking system also analyzes data on graduation rate performance, faculty resources, percentage of faculty who are full-time, percentage of students in top 10% of high school class, and financial resources. In addition to the overall ranking, the magazine developed additional comparisons involving lowest acceptance rate, highest graduation rate, and highest proportion of classes under 20. ASBCS member schools ranked high in all categories, but alumni giving lowered their total scores and kept them from being ranked higher.

10 years ago

Southern Baptist missionary Dennis McCall of Vicksburg and his family are safe but separated in the aftermath of a military coup in the African nation of Burundi, where they serve as agricultural evangelists.

20 years ago

David R. Grant, longtime pastor of Jackson's Broadmoor Church and a 1945 graduate of Mississippi College (MC), is selected to receive the Alumnus of the Year award from the MC National Alumni Association during homecoming activities.

50 years ago

John Lundry, pastor of Eureka Church, Rockwood, Tenn., suffers a heart attack while preaching. He completes his sermon, saying, "This may be my last sermon and I want to complete it." He was carried from the church after the service and died later that afternoon in a local hospital.

Looking back

2003 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

AND ASSOCIATED MEETINGS SCHEDULE

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

- **Associational Missions Directors Conference**, 10:30 a.m., Rankin Association, Brandon. Contact: J.C. Prather at (662) 728-6132. E-mail: prenbatp@dixie-net.com.

- **Mississippi Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference**, 1:15 p.m., Fifth Floor of First Church, Jackson. Speakers: Sarah Maddox, Shirley Futral. Contact: Kay McDonnell at (601) 292-3305, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 305. E-mail kmc-donnell@mbcb.org.

- **Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference**, 1:30 p.m. Speakers: Don Boone, Shannon Marshall, Gene Henderson. Contact Bob Dominy at (601) 939-6282.

- **Lay Missions Conference**, 3 p.m., First Church, Jackson. Contact: Carol Wright at (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

- **Lay Missions Banquet**, 5 p.m., First Church, Jackson. Larry Cox, International Mission Board, speaking; Pure Gospel, First Church, Madison, music. \$8.50 per person. Contact: Carol Wright at (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

- **Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference**, 7 p.m. Speakers: Stephen Trammell, Al Mohler, Tom Elliff. Contact Bob Dominy at (601) 939-6282.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

- **Seminary Extension Breakfast**, 7 a.m., Baptist Building Chapel. Vivian Buttery, speaking. Contact: Keith Gordon at (601) 292-3307 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 307. E-mail: kgordon@mbcb.org.

- **Annuitants Breakfast**, 7:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall West, First Church, Jackson. Contact: Robin Nichols at (601) 292-3227 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651. E-mail: rnichols@mbcb.org.

- **Mississippi College Christian Service Alumni Continental Breakfast**, 7:30 a.m., Chapel Dining Room, First Church, Jackson. No reservations necessary. Contact: Lisa Williams at (601) 925-3208. E-mail: alumni@mc.edu.

- **MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION FIRST SESSION, 8:25 A.M.**

- **New Orleans Seminary Alumni Luncheon**, 12 noon, Fellowship Hall West, First Church, Jackson. Speakers: Charlie Harvey, Jr., and Rick Byargeon of NOBTS. \$10 per person. Contact: Randy VonKanel at (662) 842-1327 or the NOBTS Alumni Office at (800) NOBTS-01, ext. 3331.

- **Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Alumni Luncheon**, 12 noon, Steam Room Grill. Speaker: C. Berry Driver of SWBTS. \$12 per person. Contact: Brian Bailey, (662) 232-2766.

- **MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SECOND SESSION, 1:30 P.M.**

- **Blue Mountain College Alumni Dinner**, 5 p.m., Galloway United Methodist Church, Jackson. Speakers: Ruben Raquel and Bettye Coward. Don Chandler and the BMC Chorale, music. Cost: \$10. Tickets can be purchased from alumni association officers, at the BMC booth, or at the door.

- **MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION THIRD SESSION, 6:30 P.M.**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

- **Midwestern Seminary alumni breakfast**, 7 a.m., "Dutch treat breakfast," Shoney's, off High Street near Coliseum.

- **Bivocational Ministers Fellowship Breakfast**, for ministers and spouses. 7 a.m., Baptist Building Chapel. Complimentary. Contact: Kay McDonnell at (601) 292-3305, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 305. E-mail kmc-donnell@mbcb.org.

- **MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION FOURTH SESSION, 8:25 A.M.**

- **Convention Meeting of the Mississippi Council on Bivo Ministries**, immediately after the close of the last convention session, Room 309, Baptist Building. Complimentary lunch. Contact: Kay McDonnell at (601) 292-3305, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 305. E-mail kmc-donnell@mbcb.org.



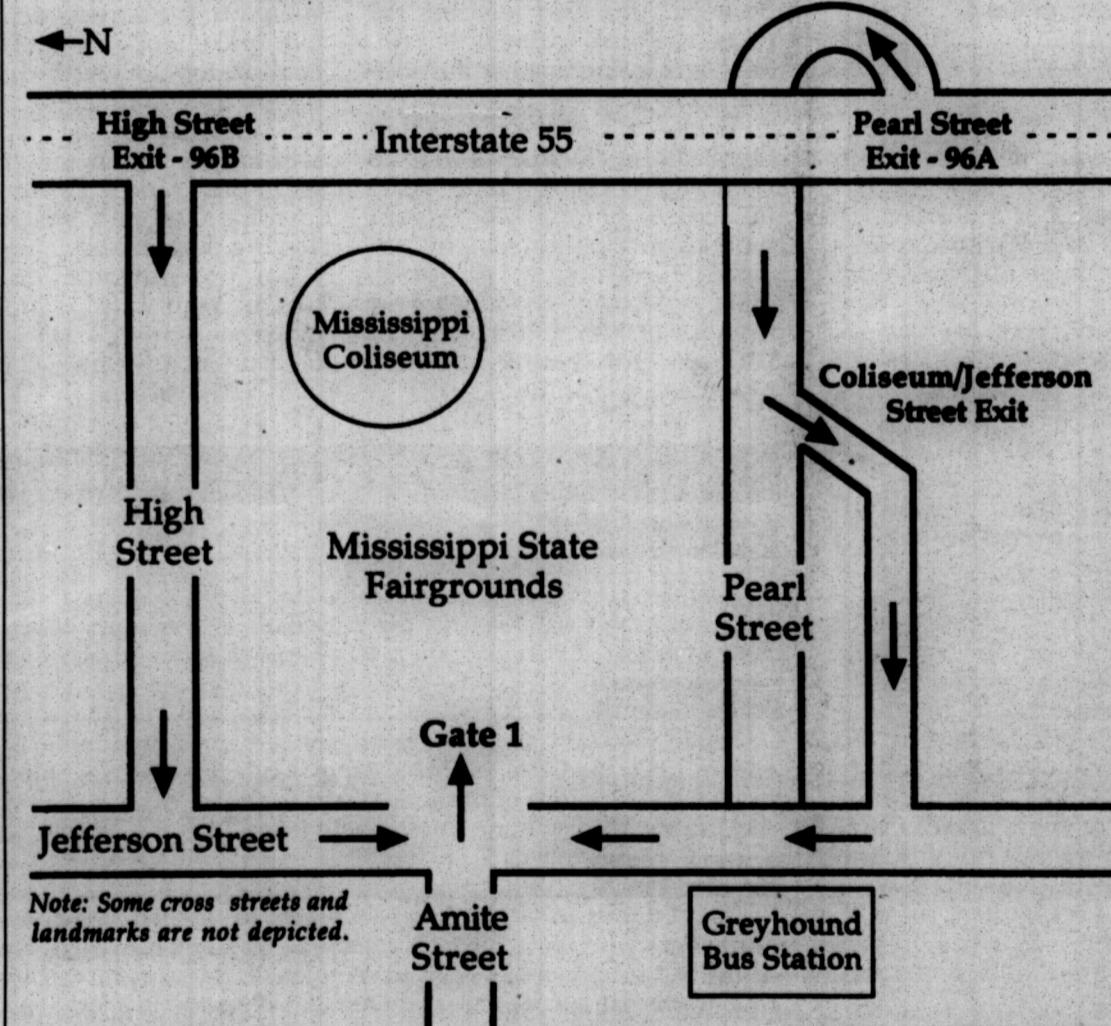
REGISTRATION

Registration for the 2003 Mississippi Baptist Convention will take place on the second floor above the State Street entrance at First Church, Jackson. Messengers may begin registering at noon on Monday, October 27. Registration will resume at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, October 28, and Wednesday, October 29.

CONVENTION OFFICE

The Convention Office will be located across from the registration area (see above). Incoming telephone messages will be received at (601) 949-1924, and will be posted at the convention office. An outgoing telephone line will be available for local and long distance (credit card only) calls. Lost and Found will be located at the Convention Office.

Fairgrounds Parking for MBC



PARKING

Parking is available within walking distance of First Church, Jackson, with lots open at the Baptist Building, in First Church's parking lots surrounding the church, and in a church parking lot at the corner of High and State Streets. In order to facilitate the daily ministries of First Church, Convention attendees are requested not to park in the church's Christian Life Center lot or garage. A parking lot on North Street directly behind the Christian Life Center will be available for Convention parking.

Parking with free shuttle service will also be available at the Mississippi State Fairgrounds on Jefferson Street. Enter the Fairgrounds at Gate 1, at the intersection of Jefferson and Amite Streets, and take the shuttle service to the convention (see map on this page). The shuttle will begin at 1 p.m. on October 27 before the first session of the Pastor's Conference and continue until 9:30 p.m. The shuttle will run October 28 from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. On October 29, the shuttle will run from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Convention attendees are urged to cross streets only at designated crosswalks. Attendees are also cautioned against over-parking on meters and illegal parking. Tickets issued by the Jackson Police Department cannot be forgiven. Improperly parked cars may be towed. Many parking lots in the area are government- or privately-owned, and parking is not recommended in those reserved lots.

DISPLAY AREA

The display area and the LifeWay Christian Resources bookstore will be located in Fellowship Hall East on the ground level floor of First Church, Jackson. Convention attendees are invited to browse the displays and the items available at the bookstore.

CHILDCARE

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board will sponsor childcare for the 2003 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) and related events at First Church, Jackson, beginning at noon on October 27 for the Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference and the 2003 Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Wives Conference. Childcare will close immediately after the adjournment of the final session of the convention at 11:30 a.m. on October 29.

Pre-registration is required. To pre-register, call First Church, Jackson, at (601) 949-1904 or (601) 949-1912. Childcare procedures are as follows:

- Pre-registration must include name of child/children, name of parents, and home church.

- A security card will be issued for each child upon arrival.

- All belongings must be labeled.

- For infants, a feeding schedule must be presented at the time of arrival.

- Children may be dropped off no sooner than 20 minutes before the beginning of a session and must be picked up no later than 20 minutes after the session adjourns.

- Children may remain in the preschool area during the convention lunch break on Tuesday, October 28, if parents provide a sack lunch.

The convention board wishes to thank the preschool ministry of First Church, Jackson, for providing administrative support and childcare personnel. Childcare is being funded by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

The church's preschool department is located at the drive-through just off the intersection of State and College Streets, north of the church Skywalk.

HOW DUMB CAN WE BE?

In some ways the people on the globe today are brighter and intellectually more advanced than some of those who have preceded us, but I'm telling you, we can be the "walking dumb" also. Of the people I know across Mississippi and from the Eastern Seaboard to the West Coast, I know of very few folks who live in the middle of wilderness surroundings. Oh, I know of a few folks who go off to a cabin in the woods, or a deer camp, or a place that may be a hideaway, and even there they generally want everything from running water to a microwave and are more than likely connected with the outside world by one or two sources of communication.

Most of us do not live in a world where tigers, bears, alligators, and elephants come snooping around. In one week's time in the first part of October 2003, there were some incredible breaking stories across America involving our connection with wildlife. It all began with Roy Horn, who for over 30 years has trained beautiful white tigers to be in a show out in Las Vegas. The tiger, in the middle of the show and for whatever reason, turned on Horn and attacked him, taking him by the throat and



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

dragging him off the stage like a rag doll.

Then, within a day or so there was breaking news from New York City from an apartment house where a man had raised a tiger and an alligator. The animals were only discovered because the man went to the hospital and told the doctor that a dog had attacked him. The doctor did not believe him, so the man went to another city to find treatment and the folks there followed up. Eventually the huge alligator and the full grown tiger were found locked up in his apartment.

Then, there was a couple who had spent years studying, filming, and documenting the lifestyle and activities of bears in Alaska. This couple knew the bears, had lived around them, been in close proximity to all of their activities, knew their habits, and yet the bodies of the man and the woman were found mauled and lifeless. You may

be brighter than the noon day sun, know calculus, and be able to speak "computerese," but don't monkey with the alligator or you may find yourself snake bit. I certainly am aware that that's a mixture of metaphors, but it also reminds us that we are dealing with wild, wild animals and regardless of how bright we are, we do not know how they think and we can end up dead playing with them.

Now, these folks are not by themselves. I see people every day playing with something even more deadly — SIN! Sin is a declared and dedicated killer. Regardless of how long it takes, it will eventually destroy. The Bible says it so succinctly: "The wages of sin is death." It shows the pattern of sin as James would tell us, "Lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin, its appeal and its destructiveness, has nothing to do with

intelligence! Sin has to do with desire, passion, greed, lust, longing, and crossing over the barriers to have what you should not have because it will destroy you, but you go after it anyway! Whether you are going to enjoy it to gratify your flesh, to fill your stomach, or to reduce your pain level, if you keep playing with it, laughing about it, keeping it at arm's length and controlling it, one day you will discover that it has you pinned to the floor of life and is about to attack the jugular.

Sin is no play thing and the only way that it can be dealt with is through radical treatment. Here it is from the Scripture. When the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death," it is followed by, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus Christ died on the cross, an ugly death; a horrible death. He died taking all of our sin payment upon Himself and He alone can deliver us from the ravages of sin. So, we have hope and we have a salvation to share with the world. We have the only way to cage and destroy the wild animal of sin.

If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can today and He will bring control to the chaos of your life. He will give you a future, a plan, and His will.

Mississippi churches observe anniversaries

The Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission (MBHC) has noted that 40 churches and one association have celebrated or will celebrate significant anniversaries during 2003, representing 4950 years of service in Kingdom work. Each church celebrating a significant anniversary will receive a framed certificate and a letter of commendation. The MBHC is delighted to assist churches in planning, executing, and evaluating special anniversary celebrations. The MBHC requests that any church not included in the list below notify the Commission at P.O. Box 4024, Clinton, MS 39058. Telephone: (601) 925-3434. E-mail: pyron@mc.edu. The churches celebrating significant anniversaries followed by associational membership:

175 YEARS

- County Line (Copiah)
- Hopewell (Copiah)
- New Providence (Copiah)

150 YEARS

- Hinkle Creek (Alcorn)
- Pleasant Hill (Golden Triangle)
- Providence (Itawamba)
- Yellow Leaf (Lafayette)
- First, Terry (Metro)
- Duck Hill (Montgomery)
- Hopewell (Pontotoc)
- New Hope (Pontotoc)
- Piney Grove (Pontotoc)
- Cato (Rankin)
- Concord (Smith)

125 YEARS

- Calvary (Carroll)
- Mission Hill (Lincoln)
- Midway (Newton)

- Mt. Pleasant (Smith)
- Highland (Tishomingo)

100 YEARS

- Agricola (George)
- First, McLain (Greene)
- Wade (Jackson)
- Jasper Association
- Eastview, Laurel (Jones)
- Pleasant Home (Jones)
- West Laurel (Jones)
- Pine Forest (Lauderdale)

- Renfroe (Leake)
- Calvary, Bogue Chitto (Lincoln)
- Heucks Retreat (Lincoln)
- Holly Springs (Lincoln)
- Sandy Hook (Marion)
- Damascus (Metro)
- South McComb (Pike)
- East Prentiss (Prentiss)
- First, Mize (Smith)
- Oak Grove (Smith)
- Hiwanee (Wayne)
- Clear Springs (Yalobusha)
- Main Street, Hattiesburg (Lebanon)

MBC accommodations available

The following hotels and motels near First Church, Jackson, have agreed to offer special rates for people attending the 2003 annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. When making reservations, ask for the Mississippi Baptist Convention rate, which will be effective only for reservations made for October 26-28. All rates are plus tax. * indicates complimentary breakfast. Please note that the Crowne Plaza will not honor the rate that was published previously, and has been removed from the list.

Best Western Executive Inn
Double/King: \$55
(601) 969-6555
725 Larson Street
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Clarion*
Flat Rate: \$62
(601) 969-2141
400 Greymont Ave.
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Days Inn
Double: \$55.00; King: \$50.00
(601) 352-7387
804 Larson Street
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Hampton Inn*
Double/King: \$75.00; Suite: \$95.00
(601) 352-1700
320 Greymont Ave.
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Holiday Inn Express*
Single/Double: \$65.00; Suites: \$79
(601) 948-4466
310 Greymont Ave.
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Red Roof Inn Coliseum
Single/Double: \$45.99
(601) 969-5006
700 Larson Street
(I-55, Exit 96B)

Web site test, e-mail service set for MBC

Participants in the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) are invited to visit the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) web site beta test exhibit in Fellowship Hall East. MBCB staffers are presently engaged in the first major overhaul of the board's web site, and a trial version will be available at the exhibit for attendees to tour, test, and offer recommendations. The beta test is open to all interested parties regardless of computer experience and skill level. A printed form will be available at the exhibit so testers can record their impressions of the proposed redesign.

For the first time at a Mississippi Baptist Convention annual session, attendees will be able to check their e-mail free of charge in the exhibit hall area (Fellowship Hall East). A computer terminal with Internet access will be available at MBCB's web site exhibit, and conventioneers who have the capability of checking their e-mail from a remote location are invited to stop by the exhibit at their convenience. Due to anticipated high utilization of the e-mail computer at the exhibit, users are asked to keep their time on the computer to a minimum in order that everyone may be served.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Brotherhood of Immanuel Church, Greenwood

Members of the Brotherhood of Immanuel Church, Greenwood, held a workday in August during which one crew constructed a



Ben James, pastor, Royce, and Jackie Barnes

wheelchair ramp for a local couple while a separate crew renovated a bathroom for another family to make it wheelchair accessible. Pictured are some of the men from Immanuel's Brotherhood.

Lee G. Royce, president of Mississippi College, Clinton, was a recent guest speaker at Utica Church, Utica, in both morning worship services. Pictured (from left) are Ben James, pastor, Royce, and Jackie Barnes, minister of youth and children.

The GAs, RAs, and Mission Friends of Immanuel Church, Columbus, held a GA 90th birthday party, Party on for Missions, on September 10. They made happy birthday bags for area shelters and needy families so they can have birthday parties for their children.

The CenturyMen, a one hundred voice men's chorus, served in a musical mission effort to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland June 23-July 8. The choir had over 160 individuals from across the nation who participated in the 2003 European

Mission Tour including Raymond Ball, retired minister of

er, is the musical director and Conductor of The Century Men. Pictured (from left) are Red and Ball at Karlskirche in Vienna, Austria.

North Central Association and Mid-Delta Association teamed up to hold a Hispanic church camp at Camp Lakeside, Tallahatchie. Nineteen children and youth attended. Organized by Joe Young, pastor to Hispanics, Bolivar, the camp was directed by Ben Kennedy, Camp Lakeside.



Buryl Red and Raymond Ball

music of Highland Colony Church, Ridgeland. Buryl Red, a composer, arranger, and produc-



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HOMECOMINGS & REVIVALS

Janice, Brooklyn: Oct. 26-29; Sunday, 11 a.m., dinner will be served, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Randy Lewman, evangelist; Bob Thames, music; Dean Cook, pastor.

Hopewell, Franklin: Oct. 26; 190th birthday and dedication of the sanctuary renovation; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch and an afternoon service will follow; Tony Mullins, pastor.

McDonald, Leake: Nov. 2; registration, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch at noon; Jerry Williams and Keith Mangrum, pastors.

Como, Como: Oct. 26-28; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. and Tues., 6:30 p.m.; John McMullen, Barton, Tenn., evangelist; Kevin Neiminen, Barton, Tenn., music; Andy Brasher, pastor.

Jericho, Guntown: Oct. 26; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m.; a covered dish meal will follow; Marvin Robbins, preaching; Southern Image, music.

Ludlow, Scott: Oct. 26;

Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch at noon; Clifton Davis, preaching; M. L. Wallace, pastor; Dwight Cooper, music.

Trinity, West Point: Oct. 26; 25th anniversary; worship, 10:30 a.m.; lunch will be served; concert will follow; Larry Haggard, preaching; Hugh Mooreland, music; Bill Monaghan, Amory, concert; Eddie Brock, pastor.

First Church, Newton: Nov. 16-19; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jeff Parker, Southside, Jackson, preaching; Gary Dover, Hickory, Hickory, music; Leroy Brewer, pastor.

First Church, Houlka: Nov. 2-5; Sunday, 9:45 a.m., 10:50 a.m., lunch will follow, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jonathan Childress, speaking; Melinda Kopp, music; David Blackwell, pastor.

Crossview, Brandon: Oct. 26-29; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Chuck Herring, First Collierville, Tenn., speaking; Embrace, Brandon, music.

West Drew, Drew: Oct. 26-29; 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; James

Thornhill, preaching; James McNall, pastor.

Yale Street, Cleveland: Oct. 26-29; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.;

Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Wed., concert at 6:30 p.m.; Randall Creel, Forrest, preaching; Carrie Cottam and Tim Goodson, Cleveland, music; John Chouccoli Jr., pastor.

COLLEGE NEWS

William Carey College's Fall Preview Day, a day designed for high school seniors and two-year college transfer students to visit the Hattiesburg campus, will be held November 15 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The day's events are divided into two sessions, one for students and one for parents. The student schedule begins at 9 a.m. with registration and a continental breakfast, Thomas Fine Arts Building. Faculty advisement, campus tours, a student organization fair and lunch will follow. The parents' schedule will begin at 9 a.m. with registration and breakfast followed by a session focusing on financial aid. Parents will then take a tour of the campus concluding with lunch at noon. Admission is free. For more information, call (601) 318-6103 or (800) 962-

5991, ext. 103. To learn more about WCC visit www.wmcarey.edu.

Eleven students attending the Mission and Outreach Spanish class at William Carey College, along with Cheryl Maqueda, instructor of Spanish at WCC, and Debbie Blackledge, a recent WCC graduate, implemented a bible school for Hispanic speaking residents at the La Hoya Spanish Modular Housing complex, Laurel. Community service projects are routinely included in the core curriculum at WCC. Melissa Thames, a WCC student, is pictured here with one of the participants in the Spanish speaking summer bible study program held at a Laurel apartment complex.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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LFV ZN QNFP WUEQLEV

L CBPPCN, LFV WNCC

UF PZN XEUSFV, LFV

HELKNV PZLP, BW BP

QNEN HUOOMBNCN, PZN

ZUSE DBXZP HLOO

WEUD ZBD.

DLEA WUSEPNNF:
PZBEPK-WBRN

Clue: W = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm 25:5

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Jim McNeil • Sun 11/2 - 6:30 pm
Drama Evangelist
St. Louis, Missouri

Jimmy Jackson • Mon 11/3 - 7:00 pm
Pastor, Whitesburg Baptist Church
Huntsville, Alabama

Bob Pitman • Tue 11/4 - 7:00 pm
Pastor, Kirby Woods Baptist Church
Memphis, Tennessee

Ted Traylor • Wed 11/5 - 7:00 pm
Pastor, Olive Baptist Church
Pensacola, Florida

Music Director
Phil Willis
Music Evangelist
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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John Yates - Director
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JUST FOR THE RECORD

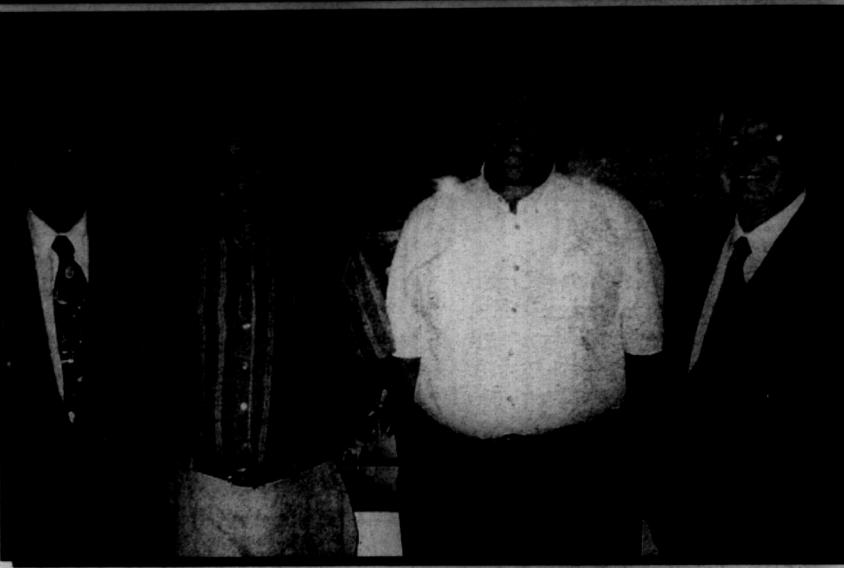


Deacon Ordination of Westwood Church, Meridian

McNeece and Jim Holcomb, pastor.

Yandell Road Church, Gluckstadt, baptized five on September 14. Pictured (from left) are Kevin Pearson, Laura Pearson, Johnnie Price, Justin Riley, Ryan Comans, and Author Comans, pastor.

Daniel Jolly was recently ordained at the request of Christ Church, Grenada, by First Church, Winona. Pictured (from left) are



Curbow, Turner, Powell, and Estes, pastor



Pearl McCullough



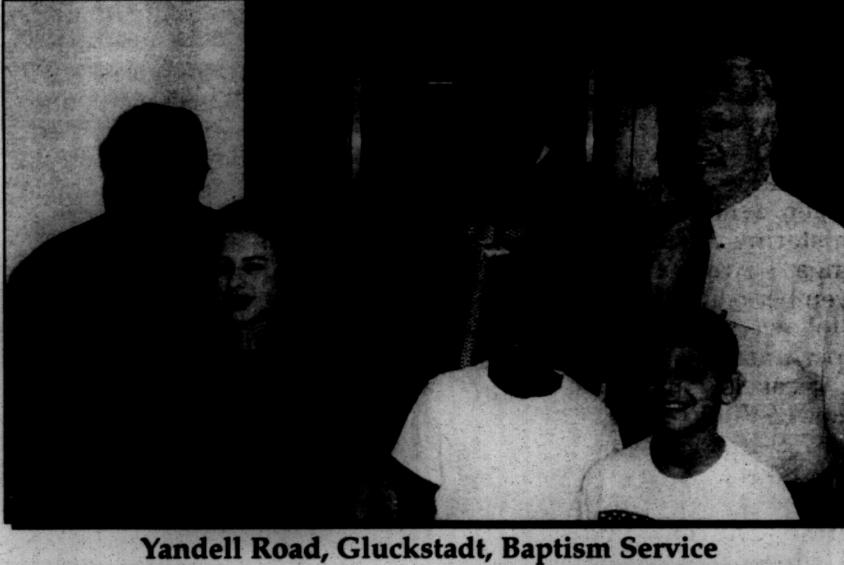
Youth of Auburn Church, Tupelo

Johnny Walker, Laura Jolly, and Jolly.

Dorsey Church, Itawamba, held an ordination service for two deacons, Al Turner and Gary Powell. Pictured (from left) are Howard Curbow, Turner, Powell, and Jerry Estes, pastor.

First Church, Charleston, recently held a GA and Mission Friends end of the summer party.

The youth of Auburn Church, Tupelo, attended Mission Connect in Grifton, N.C., July 20-25. They worked in a Back Yard Bible Club, a men's group home, and painted a house that was damaged during hurricane Floyd. Pictured (from left, front) is the paint team Josh Conley, Adam Robertson, Austin Kimbrough, Leighanna Richey, Lauren Box, (back) Allen Stanford, Daniel Bucci, and Blake Jones. The ministry team pictured (from left, front) Elizabeth Mitchell, Jane Stanford, Dana Jones, Allison Lot, (middle) Ashley Farris, Kelly Dillard, Sandra Curbow, (back) Morgan Leslie, Amy Gregory, and Terry Ramey.



Yandell Road, Gluckstadt, Baptism Service



Johnny Walker, Laura and Daniel Jolly



Youth of Auburn Church, Tupelo



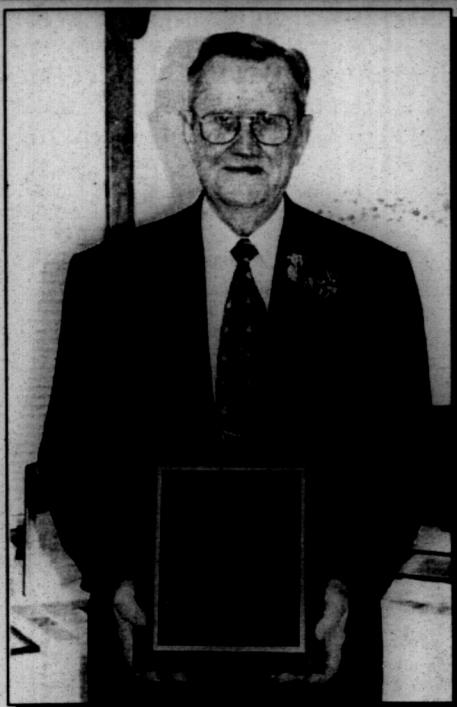
McNeese and Holcomb, pastor

Luka Church, Tishomingo, licensed Mitch McNeece to the ministry on September 7. Pictured (from left) are



GAs of First Church, Charleston

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Hugh Martin

The Ladies of Edon Church, Stringer, will present Women Ministering to Women, All Things Are Possible on November 8. Registration begins at 5 followed by a soup and salad supper, music by the Brady Girls, and speakers Ginny and Tracy Taylor. RSVP by November 1 at (601) 729-2693. A love offering will be taken.

First Church, Louisville, will present Iris Blue in her story *Rebellion To Redemption* on November 20 at 7 p.m. The Public is welcome. An encore appearance will be Friday at noon with a free lunch. Ladies only.

Liberty Church, Newton, will host a Prophecy Conference November 2-5.

Donnie Guy, Gulfport, will be speaking. Services will be held Sunday at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. and Mon.-Wed. at 7 p.m. For more information, call (601) 683-0503. Joey Lang is pastor.

Fernwood Church, Gulfport, will host High Attendance Day for Sunday School on October 26. The goal is 70-100. A free continental breakfast will be served at 9 a.m. followed by Sunday School at 9:45 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. For more information, contact (228) 896-4556 or fernwoodbc@aol.com. Jim Kultau is pastor.

Crooked Creek Church, Silver Creek, will have a gospel sing on October 26 at 6 p.m. featuring The Next Generation Quartet. All are welcome.

Crooked Creek Church, Silver Creek, will host a marriage enrichment conference November 1 and 2. Ronnie and Beverly Cottingham, Lucedale, will be leading. Admission is \$20 per couple. For reservations, call (601) 886-7646.

Governor Ronnie Musgrove recently spoke at First Church, Carriere, helping name Berta Lee White as Miss Inspiration for her outstanding service to others through church activities and Farm Bureau. White is a member of Arkadelphia Church, Bailey. Some of the governor's presentation will be on *To Learn the Bible* television program over WLOX TV in Biloxi Sundays at 6:45 a.m.

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LEESVILLE - FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH: Full-time youth and recreation minister. Send resumes with photo to: Youth Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Leesville, P.O. Box 1568, 1400 Nolan Trace, Leesville, LA 71446; or email fbcleesville@vnonline.net.

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MINISTER OF MUSIC, TRINITY UNITED Methodist, Opelika, Alabama. Salary \$40,000-60,000. The minister of music is responsible for leading and overseeing the entire ministry of music. Trinity is a conservative, evangelical church called to be an equipping center for the purpose of winning and discipling Christians. Contact: Scott Kaak at (334) 745-2632.

KINGWOOD FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN Kingwood, Texas is now accepting resumes for Minister of Adult Discipleship to lead in planning, implementing and evaluating the needs of our adult Christian education ministry. Please send resumes to KFBC, attn: minister of adults search comm., 2303 Tree Lane, Kingwood, TX 77339 or email resume to eowen@kfbc.org.

NORTH MONROE BAPTIST CHURCH IS looking for a full-time student minister. Email resumes to youthsearch@northmonroe.com. Or mail them to North Monroe Baptist Church at 21 Finks Hideaway Road, Monroe, LA 71203. You can learn more about the church and its ministries at www.northmonroe.com.

PIANIST/KEYBOARDIST NEEDED, Southside Baptist Church, paid posi-



(l-r) Greene, Prevost, Smith, Harris, and (seated) Hurt



Donald, Chris Layton, pastor; and Miller

Center Ridge Church, Yazoo City, will have an open house November 9 from 2-4 p.m. A reception honoring their new pastor and his wife, Wayne and Laura Oster, will follow.

Black Jack Church, Vaughan, will present a concert October 26 at 7 p.m. featuring Louis Smith, pastor, and three ministers of music with whom he served with, Rick Greene, First Church, Madison; David Prevost, Calvary, Tupelo; Allen Harris, North Oxford Church, Oxford; and with accompanist Sherrie Hurt, First Church, Madison. Pictured (from left) are Greene, Prevost, Smith, Harris, and (seated) Hurt.

Laurel Hill Church, Philadelphia, honored Hugh Martin, pastor, with a 50th anniversary celebration of preaching on August 16. Martin has pastored Singleton and Bethel, Winston; Madden, Leake; High Hill, Spring Creek, New Black Jack, Fellowship, and Laurel Hill, Neshoba; Gulfport Heights, Harrison; Valence St., New Orleans; and Emmanuel, Washington. The church presented a plaque to Martin. Food and fellowship were enjoyed.

Evergreen Church, Shubuta, ordained Kenneth Donald and James Miller as deacons on August 31. Pictured (from left) are Greene, Prevost, Smith, Harris, and (seated) Hurt.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH IN Meridian is seeking a full-time associate pastor of youth and education. Please

send resumes or letters of interest to New Hope Baptist Church, attention search committee, 6573 Highway 145 South, Meridian, MS 39301.

ORGANIST, CASTLEWOODS Baptist Church. Send a letter of interest or resume to 175 Stonecastle Drive, Brandon, MS 39047, via e-mail or fax. Fax number (601) 992-2623. For information call (601) 992-9977.

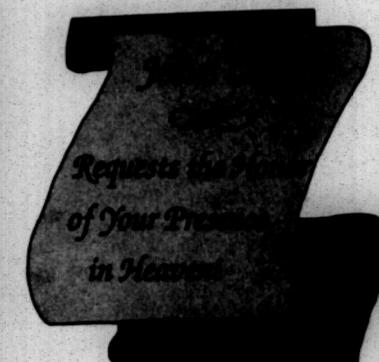
MT VERNON BAPTIST CHURCH IS looking for a pianist for Sunday morning services, except for the fifth Sunday. If anyone is interested call (662) 967-2948.

PIANIST/KEYBOARDIST NEEDED, Southside Baptist Church, paid posi-

tion. For more information call (601) 372-9161.

PART-TIME MINISTER TO STUDENTS - Noxapater Baptist Church is looking for a part-time student minister to work with grades 7-12. Work requirements are Wednesday and weekends. For more info contact: Noxapater Baptist Church, Student minister search committee, P.O. Box 251, Noxapater, MS 39346 or (662) 724-2156.

THE MISSISSIPPI'S SHERIFF'S BOYS AND Girls Ranches, Inc. is currently seeking a married couple for full-time house-parents. If interested, call (662) 327-7555 or send resume to: The Mississippi Sheriff's Boys and Girls Ranches, Inc., P.O. Box 1428, Columbus, MS 39703.



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2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Mission Trip participants, Calvary Church, Parchman

Seventy-four people returned in July from the 15th Mexico mission trip of **Calvary Chapel, Parchman**. They did construction on a church and pastor's home, held 4 medical eye clinics, taught 9 VBS's with an enrollment of 480 children and adults. The clinics treated 252 medical patients and 81 eye patients. One hundred and forty-four Mexicans accepted Christ.



WOM of Steele Church, Scott Association



Hope Church, Cedar Bluff Note Burning



Ingalls Avenue Church, Pascagoula Freedom Readers

Hope Church, Cedar Bluff, recently held a note burning. Pictured is Barry Hathcock, pastor, preparing to burn the bank note.

Ingalls Avenue Church, Pascagoula, recently completed their summer reading program with 33 children participating. The children broke their record with reading 2,470 books. Local businesses and banks donated money and prizes to encourage the children to continue reading. John Turner is pastor.

The **WOM of Steele Church, Scott**, recently held their annual Back to School Bash. This theme was a Hawaiian Luau. School supplies were collected to donate to area schools.

Pine Grove Church, Magee, recently held VBS. Pictured are the participants.

The **Mission Friends of Freeny Church, Leake**, celebrated Christmas in August. They collected personal care items for local prison ministry. Pictured (from left) are Jennie Roland, leader, Ashten Collier and Victoria Sprayberry.

New Hope Church, Foxworth, ordained Ricky Joe Rowell as deacon on August 24. Pictured (from left) are Duwane Brumfield, Rowell, his wife Brandie, and David Milligan, interim pastor.



Brumfield, Ricky Joe & Brandie Rowell, and McMillican



Jennie Roland, leader; Ashten Collier, and Victoria Sprayberry



GAs of Broadmoor Church, Madison



VBS Participants of Pine Grove Church, Magee

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

The Spirit Provides Wisdom

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

By Jon Daniels

To be effective, a telescope must be focused. To be effective, a microscope must be focused. To be effective, binoculars must be focused. To be effective in our Christian lives, we must be focused.

Read these words: secularism; sensuality; preoccupation with pleasure, athletics, and affluence; intellectualism; greed; dishonesty; drunkenness; lust; selfishness. A list of things on which our society is focused? Yes, but also descriptive of first-century Corinth's society, the environment in which Paul was working as he strived to help the fledgling Corinthian Christians get their focus right.

We need the wisdom that the Spirit provides to get our lives focused on God's agenda, and off ourselves. Kenneth Chafin said, "The basic problem with which Paul is dealing is still the church's

problem today — the need to be more sensitive as to how our lives affect our witness in the world" (Communicator's Commentary, 1 & 2 Corinthians). Only as we live our lives according to the wisdom of the Spirit will we be able to have that greater sensitivity.

The Spirit provides wisdom for us in these areas:

IN WITNESSING - 2:1-5

Paul knew that his wisdom and eloquence would not have brought about any significant life change in his hearers. His resolution to "know nothing, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (v. 2) made it clear that he was not relying on anything or anyone other than the Spirit to give him the power he needed to share the Gospel.

While God does use our abilities, personalities, and other aspects of our lives during our



Daniels

witnessing efforts, we must rely on the wisdom of the Spirit to give us the words to say in the right place and at the right time.

Whether we are using the FAITH outline, the Roman Road, or our own personal testimony, it is ultimately the wisdom of the Spirit that leads us as we share, and the power of the Spirit that convicts a person of their need for Christ and leads them to make the decision to accept Him as their personal Savior. Like Paul, we may feel weak, afraid, and hesitant (v. 3), but as we make ourselves available to the Spirit's wisdom, we will be obedient witnesses for Christ.

IN DEEPER SPIRITUAL TRUTHS - 2:6-10

Paul did not stop with a mere declaration of the Gospel; he also taught a deep wisdom of God to those who were more mature in their faith. Believers need to "leave behind the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity" (Heb. 6:1). Warren Wiersbe said,

"...the message of the Gospel is simple enough for an illiterate pagan to understand, believe, and be saved.

It is also so profound that the most brilliant theologian cannot fathom its depths." (The Bible Exposition Commentary, p. 574)

The "hidden wisdom" or "mystery" that Paul referred to was the truth that was hidden in the Old Testament but is now revealed by the Spirit to those who belong to God's family. It is a "family secret" that is known only to those who are believers.

There is a great need for the Church today to teach deeper spiritual truths to the believers. Now, more than ever, Christians need to know what they believe and why they believe it. Christians need the wisdom of deeper spiritual truths that the Spirit provides. Pastors and teachers need to take believers deeper in godly wisdom in order to counter the worldly wisdom that constantly bombards us. Far too many churches are "a mile wide and an inch deep!"

IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT - 2:11-16

There are two spirits at work. One is the "spirit of the world" (v. 12); the other is the Spirit of God. Our enemy, Satan, energizes the spirit of the world, giving the lost a "wisdom" that inflates their egos and blinds their minds as he leads them away from the truths of the Gospel and the Word of God.

As believers, we need to rely on the wisdom of the Spirit to help us discern and understand the truth that God has given to us. He is the One who teaches us spiritual truths, helping us discern what is true and what is false, and empowering us to express those spiritual truths in our lives.

Because we have the mind of Christ, we are able to understand and evaluate all things to make sure that they line up with the Word of God. Unbelievers do not have the ability to make those types of judgments because they are unable to understand spiritual truth. As one commentator stated, "We either trust God's Word taught by God's Spirit, or men's words taught by the men of the world."

Daniels is pastor of Monticello Church, Monticello.

learn more about Him, as well as put that belief into practice by doing for others. That is what pleases God.

Colossians may be the most Christ-centered book in Scripture — everything in it lifts the mind and heart to "things above" (3:1). This letter edifies the mind as it portrays Christ's person and supremacy, and it edifies the heart as it encourages us to pursue Him in our conduct and character (The Leadership Bible). Paul wanted the Colossian church to learn. He wanted them to have a desire to please God and to do good work; he wanted them to have a hunger to know God more and a knowledge that God is the source of strength. He also wanted them to know that learning this would lead to endurance, patience, joy, and a spirit of thankfulness. All these are characteristics that we as believers should pursue.

Russell is member of First Church, McComb.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Transformation

Colossians 1:1-14

By Laura Russell

Charles Swindoll writes: "Do you imagine that your tomorrow will be just like your yesterday? Sounds like you've stopped believing in a God with the power to bring change. He can make it happen! He can shatter old habits, blast apart old attitudes, wash away old resentments and hurts, push aside old fears, limitations and stereotypes. It's His energy, His power, that's at work in our lives, making the difference." The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to transform lives.

Beginning Well. (vv 1-8) In Paul's introductory words of chapter one, he commands the



Russell

Colossians for their faith, hope and love, the three principal graces in the Christian life. Love is the greatest of all human qualities, it is an attribute of God Himself. It involves unselfish service to others and it gives evidence that you care. Faith is the foundation and content of God's message; hope is the attitude and focus; love is the action. Becoming a Christian means beginning a whole new relationship with God, not just turning over a new leaf or determining to do right. New Christians have a changed purpose, direction, attitude, and behavior. The power of the Gospel to transform lives is evi-

dent when people hear and understand the truth of God's grace, put their faith in Jesus Christ, and display love toward God's people.

Moving to maturity. (v.9) Paul constantly prayed for the Colossians that their lives would be transformed further through the Gospel, and he specifically prayed for them to have complete knowledge of God's will. His prayer had two parts — that they might understand what God wants, and that they might have the power to do God's will. Sometimes we don't know how to pray for others, but we can use Paul's prayer pattern for the Colossians: that they (1) understand God's will, (2) gain spiritual wisdom, (3) please and honor God, (4) do kind things for others, (5) know God better and better, (6) be filled with God's strength, (7) endure in faith, (8) stay full of Christ's joy, and (9) always be

thankful. All believers have the same basic needs, so we can move forward in maturity as we pray this way for others.

Pleasing God. (vv10-14) True believers have been transformed from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from guilt to forgiveness, from the power of Satan to the power of God. Our conduct should reflect this change. Because of the Holy Spirit, we have been freed from the legalistic burden of obeying laws. We have an inner motivation (the Holy Spirit) to live "worthy of the Lord" (v.10) It is the joy of a Christian to do everything which pleases the Father who loves us. Therefore, we should live in constant contact and communication with God. When we are constantly communicating with God, we get knowledge. This knowledge is not a secret that only a few discover, but is open to everyone. God wants us to

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